

Message Text

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NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: BACKGROUND ON LEBANON FOR
MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS
FOR THE SECRETARY FROM SAUNDERS

1. SINCE YOU WILL PRESUMABLY BE DISCUSSING LEBANON IN
BRUSSELS, I WANT TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION THE RE-
SULTS OF AN INTENSIVE LOOK AT THE LEBANESE SITUATION
OVER THE WEEKEND BY HALF A DOZEN OFFICERS IN NEA, INR,
DIA, AND CIA. I WOULD NOT ALWAYS SEND SOMETHING LIKE
THIS TO YOU, BUT IN THIS INSTANCE I KNOW FROM MY OWN
INVOLVEMENT THAT THESE JUDGMENTS ARE THE RESULTS OF
THE KIND OF RIGOROUS ANALYSIS YOU HAVE APPRECIATED IN
THE PAST. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED THAT
THE RECENT TURN OF EVENTS WHICH WE DISCUSSED WITH YOU
BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE--I.E., PHALANGIST SUCCESSES TO
WHICH SYRIA HAS RESPONDED BY INCREASING ITS INVOLVE-

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MENT, SENDING PALESTINIAN UNITS FROM SYRIA--IS LEADING

TOWARD CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE ISRAELIS WOULD FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO INTERVENE.

2. IN CAPSULE, THE KEY JUDGMENT IS THAT A MEDIATION EFFORT IN LEBANON IS NOT LIKELY TO SUCCEED AT THIS POINT BECAUSE THE CHRISTIANS STILL FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THEY CAN HOLD THEIR OWN. THIS IS NOT AN ARGUMENT AGAINST OUR PRESENT COURSE, BUT IT DOES SHED LIGHT ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AS WELL AS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TIMING OF ANY INITIATIVE. THE JUDGMENT IS THAT ONLY IF THE CHRISTIANS CONCLUDE THAT THEY FACE MAJOR SETBACKS AS A RESULT OF MILITARY REVERSES OR THEIR INABILITY TO SECURE ARMS, WOULD THEY ADJUST THEIR STRATEGY IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR WEAKNESS. THIS ADJUSTMENT COULD INCLUDE A NEW WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE. IF THERE IS NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN STRATEGY BY ONE OF THE PARTIES

TO THE CONFLICT AND NO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION TO FORCE NEGOTIATIONS, THE FIGHTING WILL CONTINUE TO ESCALATE TOWARD UNRESTRAINED CIVIL WAR.

3. THE IMPLICATION OF THIS JUDGMENT, OF COURSE, IS THAT ANY MEDIATION EFFORT OF THE KIND YOU WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH SAUVANARGUES TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS AT ALL WILL NOT ONLY HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE ELEMENTS OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT--THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM COMMUNITIES, THE POSITION OF THE PALESTINIANS, AND EXTERNAL GUARANTEES OF CHRISTIAN SECURITY--BUT WILL ALSO HAVE TO GIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION TO HOW TO PERSUADE THE CHRISTIANS AS WELL AS THE MOSLEMS THAT THEY HAVE NO HOPE OF ACHIEVING THEIR OBJECTIVES OTHER THAN BY NEGOTIATION. IT MIGHT BE WORTH YOUR SEEKING SAUVANARGUES' VIEWS ON THAT SUBJECT.

4. FOLLOWING IS A FULLER SUMMARY OF THE JUDGMENTS REACHED BY THIS GROUP OF EXPERTS:

THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON HAS TAKEN AN OMINOUS TURN WITH THE GROWING INVOLVEMENT IN RECENT DAYS OF THE LEBANESE
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ARMY AND MAINLINE PALESTINIAN FORCES BEHIND THE CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM LEBANESE RESPECTIVELY. THIS ESCALATION HAS OCCURRED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS ALREADY LEADING TOWARDS DE FACTO PARTITION. THE FIGHTING WILL CONTINUE TO ESCALATE--ALBEIT WITH TEMPORARY LULLS--UNLESS (A) THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN STRATEGY BY ONE OF THE FACTIONS, OR (B) OUTSIDERS INTERVENE POLITICALLY TO ACHIEVE A CEASE-FIRE AND TO FORCE NEGOTIATIONS ON A

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES DIVIDING THE MAJOR FACTIONS.

IN THE ABSENCE OF A DURABLE CEASE-FIRE AND WITH THE CONTINUATION OF HEAVY FIGHTING, THE SITUATION IS LIKELY TO DEVELOP IN ONE OF SEVERAL WAYS.

--INTENSIFIED FIGHTING AND FRUITLESS NEGOTIATING. ALTERNATE PERIODS OF FIGHTING AND OF GUARDED NEGOTIATING ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO CONTINUE. THIS PROCESS IS LEADING TOWARD AN ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES AND THE PALESTINIANS. THIS WOULD DIFFER FROM FULL-FLEDGED CIVIL WAR ONLY IN TERMS OF THE RESTRAINTS THAT WOULD CONTINUE TO EXIST AND IN THE POLITICAL NEGOTIATING MECHANISMS THAT MIGHT STILL SURVIVE.

- FLEDGED CIVIL WAR. THE LAST VESTIGES OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY WOULD COLLAPSE, AND THE POLITICAL LEADERS WOULD ABANDON THEIR FEEBLE NEGOTIATING EFFORTS. CIVIL WAR WOULD LEAD TO INTENSE EFFORTS BY DAMASCUS TO FORCE PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH TO ACCEPT A SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD GIVE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS TO THE MUSLIMS AND CONFIRM PALESTINIAN FREEDOM OF ACTION IN LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS, HOWEVER, WOULD SEEK TO ACCELERATE PARTITION OF THE COUNTRY.

--NEW CHRISTIAN MOVES. ONLY IF THE CHRISTIANS CONCLUDE THAT THEY FACE MAJOR SETBACKS AS A RESULT OF MILITARY REVERSES OR INABILITY TO SECURE ARMS, WOULD THEY ADJUST THEIR STRATEGY IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR WEAKNESSES. THIS COULD INCLUDE A NEW WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE, THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT FRANJIYAH, OR A MILITARY
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COUP.

--OUTSIDE MEDIATION. TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS, OUTSIDE MEDIATION WOULD HAVE TO FEATURE SYRIA. PROSPECTS EVEN THEN WOULD BE POOR. AS LONG AS THE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE, AS THEY NOW SEEM TO BELIEVE, THAT THEY CAN HOLD THEIR OWN MILITARILY, THEY WOULD NOT BE RECEPTIVE TO MEDIATION EFFORTS, EXCEPT AS A TACTICAL MANEUVER.

WE CONSIDER THAT SYRIA AND ISRAEL ARE BOTH EXERCISING DELIBERATE CAUTION IN THEIR APPROACH TO THE LEBANESE PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF MISCALCULATION, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SYRIA OR ISRAEL WILL MISJUDGE ONE ANOTHER'S INTENTIONS IN LEBANON AND ACCIDENTLY SPARK

GENERAL HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE BELIEVE THAT SYRIAN REGULAR FORCES ARE UNLIKELY TO INTERVENE SHORT OF A RADICAL CHANGE IN THE SITUATION, SUCH AS AN IMMINENT DEFEAT OF THE PALESTINIANS OR AN ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS MIGHT BE WILLING TO HOLD BACK IF THE SYRIANS ANNOUNCED A LIMITED INCURSION INTO THE BEIRUT AREA OR NORTHERN LEBANON, BUT WOULD REACT IMMEDIATELY IF SYRIAN TROOPS ENTERED THE SOUTH. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT WIDER HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD GROW OUT OF ANY DIRECT BETWEEN SYRIAN AND ISRAELI FORCES.

EGYPT IS EXPRESSING GROWING CONCERN OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON, AND MAY UNDERTAKE SOME VIGOROUS MEDIATION EFFORTS. THE EGYPTIANS APPARENTLY HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, BUT WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT IT.

THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO SHOWING CONCERN OVER EVENTS IN LEBANON. WE CONSIDER THAT THEY WOULD BE LIKELY TO RE-SUPPLY THE PALESTINIANS THROUGH SYRIA IF THE FIGHTING ESCALATES, BUT WOULD TRY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FIGHTING BEYOND LEBANON AND TO AVOID DIRECT INTERVENTION THEMSELVES. SISCO

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